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Title: A Revisionist Revision of History The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb

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# A Revisionist Revision of History: The Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb

By: John Moore

**Presentation Date** 



# What is a revisionist or revisionist history?

- An advocate of revision, especially of some political or religious doctrine. (Dictionary.com)
- Historical revisionism, the reinterpretation of orthodox views on evidence, motivations, and decision-making processes surrounding a historical event. (Wikipedia)
- Historical revisionism, either the legitimate scholastic reexamination of existing knowledge about an historical event, or the distortion of the historical record such that certain events appear in a more or less favorable light or alternatively in a particularly bad light. (Wikipedia)







## Japan's reasons to go to war

- United States Sanctions
  - Oil Embargo
- Control of the oil fields in the Dutch East Indies
- To be seen as a world power
- Preemptive Strike





"If we are ordered to [go to war with America] I can guarantee to put up a tough fight for the first six months but I have absolutely no confidence about what would happen if it went on for two or three years....I hope you will make every effort to avoid war with America."-Admiral Yamamoto

"Now it is impossible for us to lose the war. We now have an ally who has never been vanquished in three thousand years."—Adolf Hitler







### War in the Pacific: The Final Months

- The Battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa
  - Estimate Casualty Rates
    - Iwo Jima:
       Japanese: 21,000-22,000 (KIA)
       American: 6,800 (KIA)
    - Okinawa: Japanese/Okinawan
       Auxiliaries:
       110,000 (KIA) (United States estimate)
       American: 12,520 (KIA)
- Fire Bombing of Tokyo
  - Japanese Civilian Deaths: Estimate 100,000
- The War comes home
  - Japanese View: Tactical Retreat









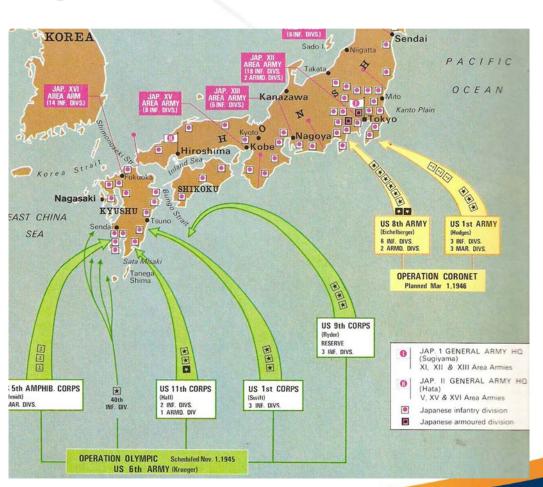
# Operation Downfall: The Invasion of Japan

## Operation Olympic

- Invasion of Kyushu Island
- November 1, 1945
- Would require 12 divisions
  - 427,400 troops
  - 626,800 supplies
  - 1,318 transports/landing crafts

### Operation Coronet

- Defeat Japanese forces in the Tokyo area
- March 1, 1946
- Redeployment of troops from Europe
- Would require 14 divisions
  - 462,000 troops
  - 609,000 supplies/equipment









## **Operation Downfall: Projected Casualties**

- Really a half a million?
  - Luzon & Okinawa
    - Fight using attrition
    - Focus forces on main roads, hills, villages, airfields, ect.
    - Creates higher number of casualties
    - Kamikazes
  - Projected Casualty Rates Vary
    - Post-War Truman projected a Million
    - Two hundred to fifty thousand
    - Sometimes included total casualty rates (KIA, MIA, wounded/sick, ect.)

"An Okinawa from one end of Japan to the other" -President Truman Comments on the Invasion of Japan







## **Operation Downfall: Projected Casualties**

#### Marshall

- Invasion was the only way
- "Marshall said that it was expected that all communications with Kyushu would be destroyed."
- Total Assault Troops:
   766,700 (Exaggerated number-no footnote)
   340,600 (Involved in landing)

#### MacArthur

- "Total Forced Involved" estimated
   681,000 with "one half engaged the first
   15 days"
- 340,600 (Involved in landing)

#### Leahy

<del>-</del> 35%

Marshall: 268,345
 MacArthur: 238,350,



"Leahy pointed out that the troops on Okinawa had lost 35 percent casualties." ~ JCS Minutes from

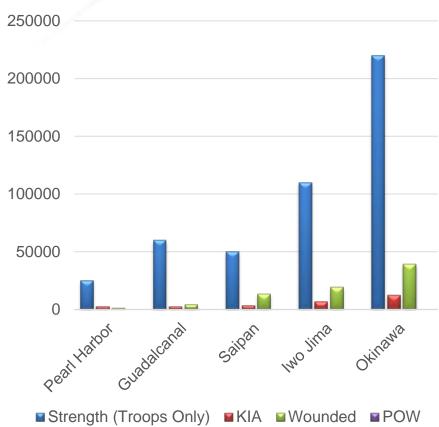
July 11, 1945



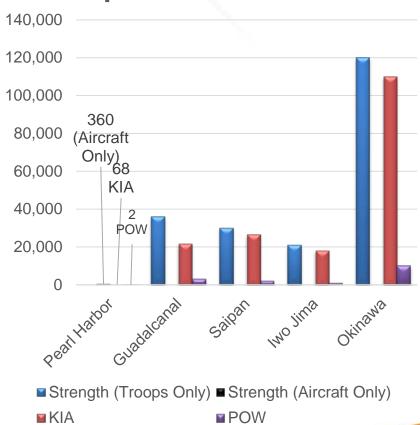


### **Pacific War Casualties**

### **United States Casualties**



#### **Japanese Casualties**



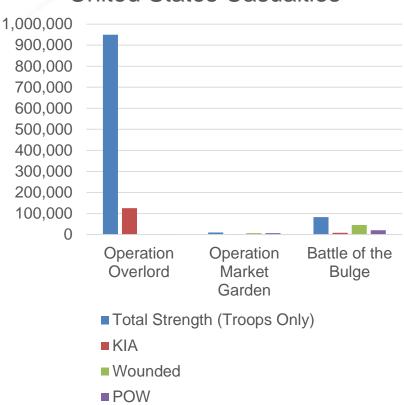




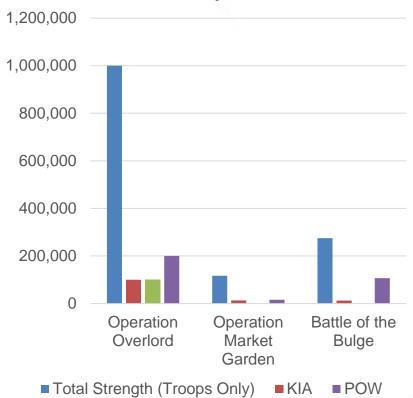


### **Western Front War Casualties**

#### **United States Casualties**



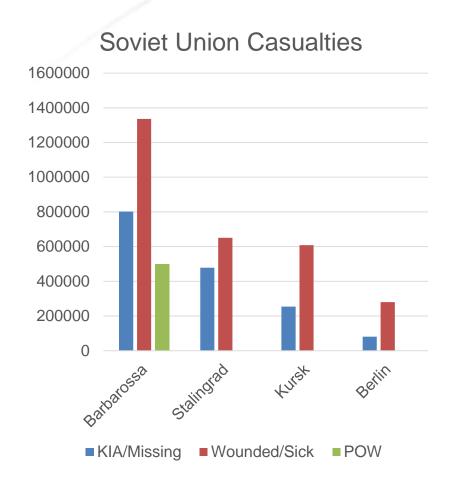
#### Nazi Germany Casualties

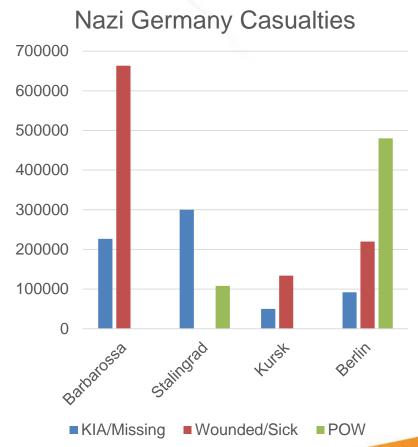






### **Eastern Front War Casualties**





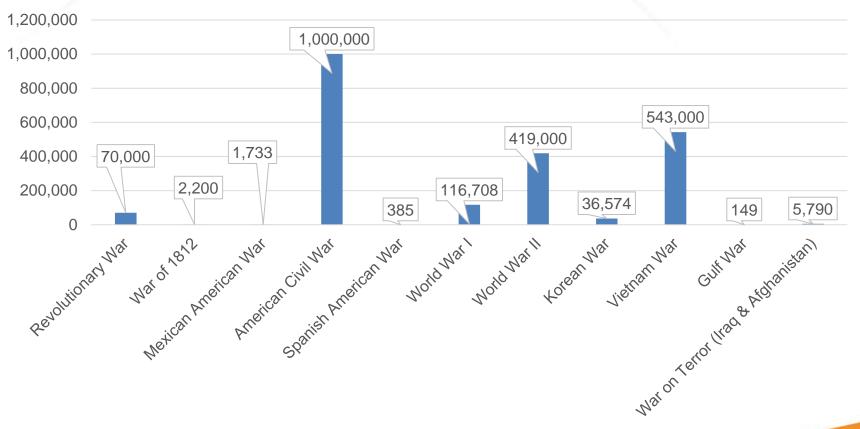






# United States Military Deaths in American Involved Wars

Total Deaths as a Result of Combat



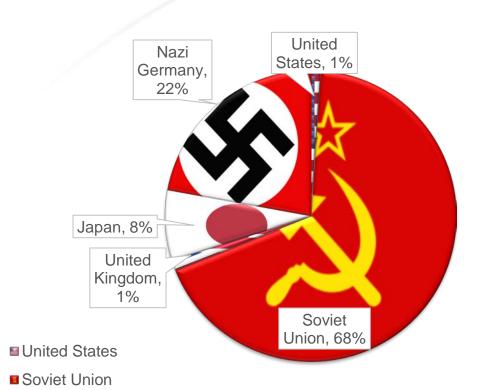
■ Total Deaths
UNCLASSIFIED







### **World War II Casualties**



Total Casualty Rates Estimates for the <u>key</u> <u>nations</u> involved in World War II (Military & Civilian Sources: National World War II Museum):

- United States: 418,500-419,400
- United Kingdom: 450,700-450,900
- Japan: 2,500,000-3,100,000
- Germany: 6,600,000-8,800,000
- Soviet Union: 24,000,000-27,000,000 (Estimate)

World Wide Total Estimate(National World War II Museum):

Deaths in Combat: 15,000,000

Wounded: 25,000,000

Civilian Deaths:45,000,000

Japan

Mazi Germany

**■** United Kingdom







Revisionists' Main Arguments on the end of World War II

- Conditional Surrender
- Value of Life Argument
- Soviet Union
   Intervention & Future
   Cold War Tension

Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam (1964)

The Decision to us the Atomic Bomb (1995) Hiroshima: Why America Dropped the Atomic

Bomb (1995)

Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the

Surrender of Japan (2005)









## **Conditional Surrender Argument**

- Did the choice to use the atomic bombs postpone the end of the war?
  - Meet Japan's Demands somewhere in the middle
  - Retain the Emperor
  - Japan could have surrendered at anytime



"In the view of the slowness with our operations in Okinawa are preceding, it is my opinion, and I recommend, that the "modified statement" proposed by Mr. Elmer Davis should be issued as a press release at an early date subsequent to the announcement of the surrender of the German armies."—Admiral Leahy (Alperovitz, pg. 40)





Japanese Surrender Terms

- Attempted to gain better terms
- Japanese offered conditions:
  - No Military occupation of Home Islands
  - Armed forces demobilize at will
  - Imperial Japanese
     Government handle Japanese
     War Criminals
- Retain the Emperor as the key figurehead



"The reasoning here was that only harsher terms would result if Japan attempted to continue fighting once the forces of Hitler were brought to bay" (Butow, 27).







### **Potsdam Conference**

- Potsdam Conditions
  - Demanded Unconditional Surrender
  - If Japan refused they would face "prompt and utter destruction."
- Russia to enter the Pacific War
- Truman tells Stalin about the atomic bomb
  - How much did Stalin know?

"We have a new weapon of unusual destructive force." President Harry Truman to Joseph Stalin at Potsdam



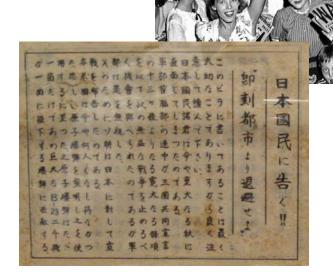
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## **Value of Life Argument**

- Blockade
  - Commerce, foods, and basic supplies were imports
  - Additional Causalities for both the United States and Japan
- Demonstration of the atomic bomb
  - Marshall's idea
  - Franck Committee









## Value of Life Argument

- Japanese protest after Hiroshima
  - The use of poisonous gases were prohibited by the Hague Convention
- However,
  - Japanese Atomic Bomb Program
    - Yoshi Nishia
  - The Unit 731 Facility
     Biological Weapons
  - The testing of Typhoid, Plague, and Syphilis on pregnant females, children, and men to see the effects the diseases had on humans.)
  - Other Weapons testing (Balloon Bombs)



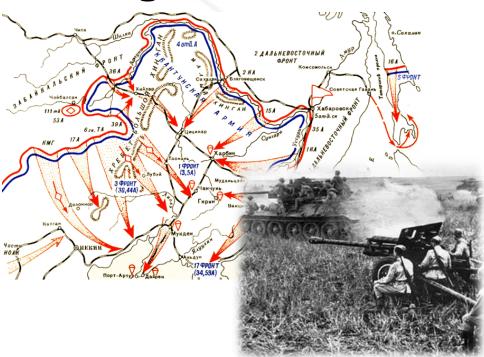






# Soviet Union Intervention & Future Cold War Tension Argument

- Had more of an impact than the Atomic Bombs
- Soviet Invasion the main reason for Japan's surrender?
  - Goes Bankrupt
  - No longer has a mediator in the conditional surrender option
- Bombings were used as a Diplomatic, Military, and Political Act to show the United States' strength



"The absolute maintenance of peace in our relations with the Soviet Union is one of the fundamental conditions for continuing the war with the United States." – Kawabe Torashrio

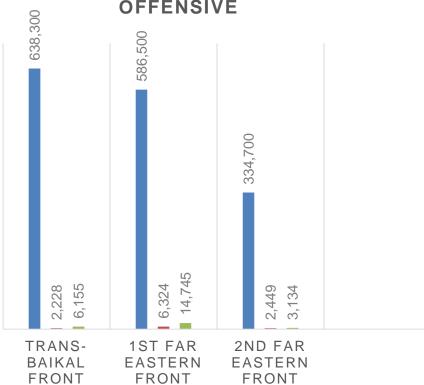






## Manchurian Strategic Offensive Statistics

SOVIET UNION STRENGTH &
CASUALTIES
IN THE MANCHURIAN STRATEGIC
OFFENSIVE











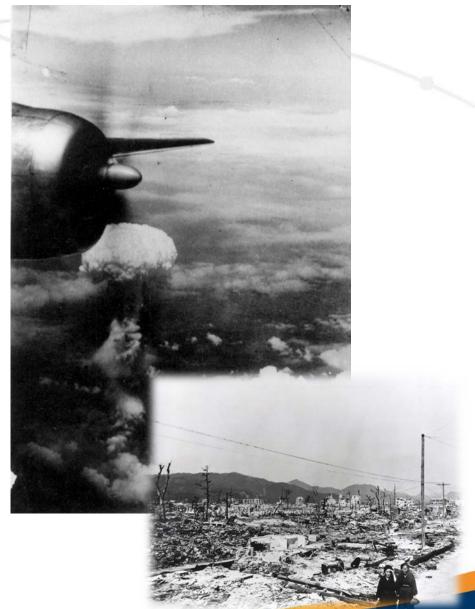






### **Twin Shocks**

- Homeland attack
  - More effective
  - Brought the war home to Japan
  - Devastated Japanese morale
- Twin Shocks argument
   Complete surprise to the Japanese
  - Soviets declaration of war on
     Japan came as an indirect surprise
- Shock effect viewpoint
  - Atomic bombings had a greater impact than the Soviets' invasion
- Revisionist thought
  - Japan's feeling of victimization









## **Red Plans Spoiled by Atomic Bomb?**









### **Future Cold War Tension**

- Three areas to consider
  - Dropped to end the war
  - Dropped to end the war with the bonus effect to intimidate the Soviet Union
  - Dropped solely to intimidate the Soviet Union
- Stalin's feelings on Hiroshima
  - Beaten in the race to end the War in the Pacific
  - Threatened by America's new weapon









# Other thoughts on the Soviets' involvement

Another item on which I ventured to advise President Truman involved the Soviets' intention to enter the Japanese war." I told him that since reports indicated the imminence of Japan's collapse I deprecated the Red Army's engaging in that war. I foresaw certain difficulties arising out of such participation and suggested that, at the very least, we ought not to put ourselves in the position of requesting or begging for Soviet aid. It was my personal opinion that no power on earth could keep, The Red Army out of that war unless victory came before they could get in. –Dwight D. Eisenhower from his memoirs *Crusade in Europe* (1948)





### **Quotes on the Atomic Bomb from United States** military, Manhattan Project Scientist, and political officials

- "I was against it on two counts. First, the Japanese were ready to surrender, and it wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing. Second, I hated to see our country be the first to use such a weapon." -Dwight D. Eisenhower (Crusade in Europe, 1948)
- "This is the biggest damn fool thing we have ever done. The bomb will never go off, and I speak as an explosives expert." - Admiral William D. Leahy
- "It is my opinion that the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender....My own feeling was that in being the first to use it, we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion, and wars cannot ne won by destroying women and children...." -Admiral William D. Leahy
- "We had developed a weapon of such a revolutionary character that its use against the enemy might well be expected to produce exactly the kind of shock on the Japanese ruling oligarchy, strengthening the position of those who wished peace, and weakening that of the military party." -Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson (The Decision to use the Atomic Bomb, 1947)
- "It is my opinion that the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender....My own feeling was that in being the first to use it, we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion, and wars cannot ne won by destroying women and children...." -Admiral William D. Leahy





# Quotes on the Atomic Bomb from United States military, Manhattan Project Scientist, and political officials

- "I have buddies who have fought through the battle of Iwo Jima. Some of them have been killed, others wounded. We've got to give these men the best weapons we can produce. If one of these men should be killed because we didn't let them use the [atomic] bombs, I would have failed them. I just could not make myself feel that I had done my part."- Unidentified Los Alamos Physicist
- "Shortly after World War II the U.S. was in a position, having a nuclear monopoly, to annihilate any country completely without fear of any similar counter-attack. It was undoubtedly unique in the history of mankind that a nation had this capability and did not take advantage of it. Historians will note many outstanding events in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hopefully this fact will not go unheralded." Harold Agnew (Post-War Quote)
- "The dropping of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki allowed the Emperor of Japan to agree to the conditions of surrender. You should read his address to his subjects. We had already won the war but there would have been a tremendous loss of life on both sides had an invasion been required." – Harold Agnew (Fifty Years of Accomplishment Speech April 12, 1993)





## Japanese Governmental and Military Officials on the Bomb and the Soviet Entry

- "The appearance of the atomic bomb does not spell the end of war....We are confident about a decisive homeland battle against American forces. Given the atomic bomb and the Soviet entry, there is no chance of winning on the basis of mathematical calculation, there will be some chance as long as we keep on fighting for the honor of the Yamato race.... If we go on like this and surrender, the Yamato race would be as good as dead spiritually."- Army Minister Anami
- "Now that such a new weapon has appeared, it has become less and less possible to continue the war. We must not miss a chance to terminate the war by bargaining [with the Allied Powers] for more favorable conditions now. Besides, however much we consult about [surrender] terms we desire, we shall not be able to come to an agreement. So mu wish is to make such arrangements as will end the war as soon as possible." -Emperor Hirohito to Foreign Minister Togo
- "The atomic bomb provided an additional reason for surrender as well as an extremely favorable opportunity to commence peace talks. I believed such an opportunity could not be afforded by B-29 bombings alone."- Prime Minister Suzuki (Post-War)
- "Just when we were smarting from the extremely great shock of the Hiroshima bomb, the Soviet Union entered the war. Continuation of the war is totally impossible, and whether willing or not we have no choice but to accept the Potsdam terms with the sole condition being that the Allies "guarantee the emperor's position." - Prime Minister Suzuki





## **Japanese Governmental and Military Officials** on the Bomb and the Soviet Entry continued...

- "The feeling that the emperor and I had about the atomic bombing was that the psychological moment we had long waited for had finally arrived to resolutely carry out the termination of the war....We felt that if we took the occasion and utilized the psychological shock of the bomb to follow through, we might perhaps succeed in ending the war."- Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal of Japan Marquis Kido (Post-War: November 1945)
- "I surmise that the atomic bomb was dropped with the intention of posing a grave threat to Japanese leaders and the people at large, forcefully compelling them to end the war. And certainly the bomb had that effect. However, we of the peace party had already been scheming for a termination of the war, and it is not correct to say that we were driven by the atomic bomb to end the war. Rather, it might be said that we of the peace party were assisted by the atomic bomb in our endeavor to the end the war."- Marquis Kido (Post-War: November 1945)
- "Perhaps the way I am putting this is inadequate, but I think that the use of the atomic bomb and the Soviet entry into the war are gifts from Heaven....The main reason I have been insisting on saving the situation [surrendering] is neither fear of an enemy attack nor even the atomic bomb and the Soviet entry into the war. Above all, it is the alarming state of domestic affairs. It is good fortune that we can now save the situation without bringing such domestic affairs into the open." - Japanese Rear Admiral Takagi Sokichi (August 12, 1945)





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With the Old Breed

Helmet for my Pillow

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**Embracing Defeat** 



